

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE DISTRICT OF SOUTH CAROLINA
ORANGEBURG DIVISION

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

v.

STEVEN VERREN BAKER
JOSEPH LOGAN BROOKS
MATTHEW TYLER FISCHER
WILLIAM MARTIN FISCHER
MATTHEW HARRISON KAIL

CRIM. NO. 5:18-205

18 U.S.C. § 371
18 U.S.C. § 981(a)(1)(C)
28 U.S.C. § 2461(c)

INDICTMENT

COUNT 1

THE GRAND JURY CHARGES:

BACKGROUND

1. The United States and approximately 183 other countries are signatories to a multilateral treaty called the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora ("CITES"). CITES regulates international trade in species whose survival is threatened by trade. The United States has implemented CITES as part of the Endangered Species Act ("ESA") and the regulations promulgated thereunder. See 16 U.S.C. § 1531 et. seq.
2. CITES provides that it shall be "unlawful for any person subject to the jurisdiction of the United States to engage in any trade in any specimens

contrary to the provisions of CITES, or to possess any specimens traded contrary to the provisions of CITES and the regulations promulgated thereunder". See 16 U.S.C. § 1538(c)(I).

3. CITES classifies wildlife specimens in three categories – as listed in Appendices I, II, and III of that treaty -- and provide specific trade protection to species listed in these categories. In order to trade such wildlife from one country to another, special international CITES permits are required. Appendix I includes species threatened with extinction and provides the greatest level of protection. Under Appendix I of CITES, a species may be imported to the United States only if, prior to importation, the importer possesses a valid CITES export permit issued by the country of export and a valid CITES import permit issued by the United States. International trade in Appendix I species for primarily commercial purposes is essentially prohibited.
4. Appendix II includes species that, although not currently threatened with extinction, may become so without trade controls. Under Appendix II of CITES, a species may be imported to the United States only if, prior to importation, the importer possesses a valid CITES export or re-export permit from the foreign country of origin.
5. Appendix III is a list of species that needs the cooperation of other countries to prevent unsustainable or illegal exploitation. International

trade in species listed in Appendix III is allowed only on presentation of the appropriate permits or certificates.

6. In order for the United States Fish and Wildlife Service ("USFWS") to approve importation of a CITES protected animal species, the importer must submit to USFWS accurate copies of packing lists and CITES permits issued by the exporting country regarding the proposed shipment. Moreover, imported animal species shipments valued over \$2,000 are subject to certain tariff duties and require Formal Customs Clearance under United States law. Under Formal Customs Clearance, United States Customs and Border Protection ("CBP") requires a customs bond be paid, essentially to function as an insurance policy to guarantee payment of the duties.
7. No applications for CITES import or export permits were submitted by, and no such permits were issued to, defendants STEVEN VERREN BAKER, JOSEPH LOGAN BROOKS, MATTHEW TYLER FISCHER, WILLIAM MARTIN FISCHER, MATTHEW HARRISON KAIL,

, authorizing the importation of Indian Roofed Turtles and Chinese Big Headed Turtles, which are listed in Appendix I of CITES; Black-Breasted Leaf Turtles, South American River Turtles, and Yellow-Margined Chinese Box Turtles, Indian Star Tortoises, Indian Flapshell Turtles, Beale's Eyed Turtles, and Four-Eyed Turtles, which are

listed in Appendix II of CITES; and the Reeves' Turtle, listed in Appendix III of CITES, or authorizing the export of Flattened Musk Turtles, which are listed as Threatened in the ESA; Florida Box Turtles, Eastern Box Turtles, and Ornate Diamondback Terrapins, which are listed in Appendix II of CITES (collectively, "Protected Turtles").

**ILLEGAL IMPORTATION AND EXPORTATION OF WILDLIFE
CONSPIRACY**

8. From in or about January 2016, through in or about June 2016, in the District of South Carolina and elsewhere, defendants STEVEN VERREN BAKER, JOSEPH LOGAN BROOKS, MATTHEW TYLER FISCHER, WILLIAM MARTIN FISCHER, MATTHEW HARRISON KAIL,

, unlawfully, knowingly, and willfully did conspire, combine, confederate, and agree with each other to traffic in Protected Turtles, in that they:

- a. Fraudulently and knowingly imported and brought into the United States merchandise contrary to law, and did receive, conceal, buy, sell, and facilitate the transportation, concealment, and sale of such merchandise after importation, knowing the same to have been imported and brought into the United States contrary to law, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 545.
- b. Fraudulently and knowingly exported and sent from the United States merchandise contrary to law, and did receive, conceal, buy,

sell, and facilitate the transportation, concealment, and sale of such merchandise prior to exportation, knowing the same to have been intended for exportation from the United States contrary to law, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 554.

- c. Did import, export, transport, sell, receive, acquire, or purchase wildlife taken, possessed, transported, or sold in violation of the laws and regulations of the United States, in violation of Title 16, United States Code, Section 3372(a)(1).
- d. Did import, export, transport, sell, receive, acquire, and purchase in interstate and foreign commerce wildlife taken, possessed, transported and sold in violation of the laws and regulations of a State and in violation of foreign law, in violation of Title 16, United States Code, Section 3372(a)(2)(A).
- e. Did make and submit false records and labels for, and false identification of, wildlife that had been, and was intended to be, transported in interstate commerce, in violation of Title 16 United States Code, Sections 3372(d)(1) and (2).

All in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 371.

MANNER AND MEANS

- 9. Hsien Lin Hsu a/k/a Jason Hsu, a co-conspirator charged elsewhere, first met STEVEN VERREN BAKER on Facebook in late 2015. Through Facebook, Hsien Lin Hsu a/k/a Jason Hsu started to communicate with

STEVEN VERREN BAKER,

regarding purchasing and trading various Protected Turtles.

10. Hsien Lin Hsu a/k/a Jason Hsu used Facebook to conduct various transactions involving unlawfully imported Protected Turtles from Hong Kong with STEVEN VERREN BAKER in South Carolina. Hsien Lin Hsu a/k/a Jason Hsu would ship live Protected Turtles to STEVEN VERREN BAKER using Fedex, sometimes at an address provided by MATTHEW TYLER FISCHER and WILLIAM MARTIN FISCHER.
11. STEVEN VERREN BAKER would then conduct domestic sales of CITES and the ESA Protected Turtles with other individuals, including but not limited to MATTHEW HARRISON KAIL.
12. Hsien Lin Hsu a/k/a Jason Hsu would receive various species of live unlawfully acquired Protected Turtles from STEVEN VERREN BAKER, such as Eastern Box Turtles, Florida Box Turtles, Ornate Diamondback Terrapins, and Flattened Musk Turtles.
13. STEVEN VERREN BAKER also negotiated sales of Protected Turtles with

14. Hsien Lin Hsu a/k/a Jason Hsu used Facebook to conduct various transactions involving Protected Turtles with

in Hong Kong. Hsien Lin Hsu a/k/a Jason Hsu said he would conceal turtles in packages that he shipped to Hong Kong. Hsien Lin Hsu a/k/a Jason Hsu would package the turtles in socks and put various items such as small pieces of candy around the turtles. Hsien Lin Hsu a/k/a Jason Hsu would label the packages as "snacks" and mail the packages through the United States Postal Service ("USPS") mail. HSU stated he would usually put two eastern box turtles per package. The individuals in Hong Kong told him to use a fake name and return address on the package in order to evade detection.

15. On or about on March 22, April 21, and April 26, 2016, four packages arrived in the United States at John F. Kennedy International Airport (JFK IA). The mailing labels on each package indicated the sender was and the parcels originated from Hong Kong. The labels also reflected the contents of the package to be "snacks". Each package was addressed to JOSEPH LOGAN BROOKS at 191 Brelands Road, Holly Hill, South Carolina. This address is also the residence of STEVEN VERREN BAKER.

16. Approximately forty-six turtles were intercepted on or about March 22, April 21, and April 26, 2016. The turtles were concealed in the packages by various bags of noodles and small pieces of candy. The turtles were

identified as Asian soft shell turtles, Reeves' Turtles, Indian Roofed Turtles, South American River Turtles, and Big Headed Turtles.

17. On or about March 25, and April 25, 2016, a Postal Inspector delivered the packages to the address of JOSEPH LOGAN BROOKS and STEVEN VERREN BAKER, both of whom accepted delivery.
18. On or about April 26, 2016, two packages arrived in the United States at JFK IA. The mailing labels on each package indicated the sender was "ALAN CHU". The parcels originated in Hong Kong. The labels also reflected the contents of the package to be "snacks". Each package was addressed to JOSEPH LOGAN BROOKS at 191 Brelands Road, Holly Hill, South Carolina. Concealed in the two packages were approximately sixteen Protected Turtles. The packages were delivered to the Holly Hill address on April 29, 2016.
19. On or about on May 3 and May 11, 2016, five packages arrived in the United States at JFK IA. The mailing labels on each package indicated the sender was . The parcels originated in Hong Kong. The labels reflected the contents of the package to be "snacks". Each of the packages was addressed to Mr. HSU at 64-14 233 Street, Oakland Gardens, New York. Approximately 42 turtles were concealed in the packages intercepted on or about May 3 and May 11, 2016. The turtles were concealed by various bags of noodles and small pieces of candy. The turtles were identified as Yellow-Margined Chinese Box Turtles,

Black-Breasted Leaf Turtles, Reeves' Turtles, Indian Roofed Turtles, South American River Turtles, and Chinese Big Headed Turtles. On or about May 3 and May 12, 2016, a Postal Inspector made controlled deliveries of the packages at the Oakland Gardens address. Hsien Lin Hsu a/k/a Jason Hsu accepted delivery of the five parcels.

20. On May 18, 2016, approximately thirty-eight Protected Turtles were seized at 191 Brelands Road in Holly Hill, the address of STEVEN VERREN BAKER and JOSEPH LOGAN BROOKS.
21. The approximate value of the smuggled turtles is between \$117,200 and \$409,250, depending on the market.

OVERT ACTS

- a. On or about January 1, 2016, STEVEN VERREN BAKER sent Hsien Lin Hsu a/k/a Jason Hsu and [REDACTED] a Facebook message containing photographs of turtles protected under CITES, that is, Indian Roofed Turtles and Diamondback Terrapins, as well as Flattened Musk Turtles protected by the ESA, for the purpose of negotiating the terms of a sale.
- b. On or about January 1, 2016, [REDACTED] sent STEVEN VERREN BAKER and Hsien Lin Hsu a/k/a Jason Hsu a Facebook message containing photographs of turtles protected under CITES, that is, Reeves' Turtles, Indian Roofed Turtles, and Flattened Musk Turtles, for the purpose of negotiating the terms of a sale.
- c. On or about January 2, 2016, [REDACTED] sent STEVEN VERREN

BAKER and Hsien Lin Hsu a/k/a Jason Hsu a Facebook message containing photographs of turtles protected under CITES, that is, Indian Roofed turtles, for the purpose of negotiating the terms of a sale, which would include Ornate Diamondback terrapins.

- d. On or about January 4, 2016, _____ sent STEVEN VERREN BAKER and Hsien Lin Hsu a/k/a Jason Hsu a Facebook message with a picture of a USPS package xxx-3376HK, to be delivered at an address in Harleyville, South Carolina, such address being associated with the family of MATTHEW TYLER FISCHER and WILLIAM MARTIN FISCHER.
- e. On or about January 5, 2016, USPS package xxx-22897HK that originated in Hong Kong was delivered to an address in Harleyville, South Carolina associated with the family of MATTHEW TYLER FISCHER and WILLIAM MARTIN FISCHER.
- f. On or about January 7, 2016, USPS package xxx-3376HK that originated in Hong Kong was delivered to the Harleyville, South Carolina Post Office and picked up by "S BAKER".
- g. On or about January 8, 2016, _____ and STEVEN VERREN BAKER communicated over Facebook regarding a proposed shipment of Indian Roofed Turtles, Big-Headed Turtles, and Sideneck Turtles.
- h. On or about January 8, 2016, WILLIAM MARTIN FISCHER, STEVEN VERREN BAKER, and Hsien Lin Hsu a/k/a Jason Hsu communicated over Facebook regarding a proposed shipment of Indian Star Tortoises.

- i. On or about January 9, 2016, _____, STEVEN VERREN BAKER, and Hsien Lin Hsu a/k/a Jason Hsu communicated over Facebook regarding a proposed sale of Florida Box Turtles and Ornate Diamondback Terrapins.
- j. On or about January 11, 2016, _____, STEVEN VERREN BAKER, and Hsien Lin Hsu a/k/a Jason Hsu communicated over Facebook regarding a proposed sale of Florida Box Turtles.
- k. On or about January 12, 2016, _____, STEVEN VERREN BAKER, and Hsien Lin Hsu a/k/a Jason Hsu communicated over Facebook regarding a proposed sale of Florida Box Turtles.
- l. On or about January 18, 2016, _____ sent STEVEN VERREN BAKER and Hsien Lin Hsu a/k/a Jason Hsu a Facebook message confirming a shipment of Big-Headed Turtles.
- m. On or about January 20, 2016, STEVEN VERREN BAKER sent _____ and Hsien Lin Hsu a/k/a Jason Hsu a Facebook message following up on the delivery of Florida Box Turtles, in which requested additional Ornate Diamondback Terrapins.
- n. On or about January 22, 2016, MATTHEW TYLER FISCHER issued Bank of America check #111 to STEVEN VERREN BAKER in the amount of \$9,500, for "Live pond stock."
- o. On or about January 25, 2016, USPS package xxx-04563HK that

originated in Hong Kong was delivered to "S BAKER" at the address of WILLIAM MARTIN FISCHER in Harleyville, South Carolina.

- p. On or about January 28, 2016, Hsien Lin Hsu a/k/a Jason Hsu communicated with STEVEN VERREN BAKER and regarding the tracking number for a shipment of Protected Turtles.
- q. On or about January 29, 2016, STEVEN VERREN BAKER exchanged text messages regarding the exchange of Chinese Softshell Turtles from Hong Kong.
- r. On or about February 3, 2016, STEVEN VERREN BAKER asked WILLIAM MARTIN FISCHER to cash a \$4,000 check.
- s. On or about February 6, 2016, USPS package xxx-75081HK that originated in Hong Kong was delivered to the Harleyville, South Carolina Post Office and picked up by STEVEN VERREN BAKER, who signed for the package as "SK Crystal".
- t. On or about February 13, 2016, STEVEN VERREN BAKER and
exchanged messages regarding the shipment of Black-Breasted Leaf Turtles, Florida Box Turtles and Eastern Box Turtles.
- u. On or about February 14, 2016, STEVEN VERREN BAKER and
exchanged messages regarding the shipment of Black-Breasted Leaf Turtles, Florida Box Turtles and Eastern Box Turtles.
- v. On or about February 16, 2016, STEVEN VERREN BAKER and

- exchanged messages regarding the shipment of Black-Breasted Leaf Turtles, Florida Box Turtles and Eastern Box Turtles.
- w. On February 21, 2016, STEVEN VERREN BAKER and
exchanged messages regarding the shipment of Indian Roofed Turtles, Black-Breasted Leaf Turtles, Florida Box Turtles and Eastern Box Turtles.
 - x. On or about February 23, 2016, WILLIAM MARTIN FISCHER and STEVEN VERREN BAKER exchanged Facebook messages regarding the sale of five Indian Star Tortoises.
 - y. On or about February 24, 2016, STEVEN VERREN BAKER exchanged text messages regarding the sale of Big Headed Turtles.
 - z. On or about February 26, 2016, USPS package xxx-6568HK that originated in Hong Kong was delivered to the Harleyville, South Carolina Post Office and picked up by "S BAKER".
 - aa. On or about February 26, 2016, WILLIAM MARTIN FISCHER and STEVEN VERREN BAKER exchanged text messages regarding the setup for Indian Star Tortoises.
 - bb. On or about March 1, 2016, USPS package xxx-0686HK that originated in Hong Kong was delivered to the Harleyville, South Carolina Post Office and picked up by "B FISCHER".
 - cc. On or about March 1, 2016, USPS package xxx-0672HK that originated

shipment of Eastern Box Turtles.

kk. On or about March 30, 2016, STEVEN VERREN BAKER sent MATTHEW HARRISON KAIL a text message confirming the transfer of approximately \$15,000 into MATTHEW TYLER FISCHER's Bank of America account.

ll. On or about March 31, 2016, STEVEN VERREN BAKER and MATTHEW HARRISON KAIL exchanged text messages confirming the above-referenced financial transaction, along with a photograph of a protected Florida Box Turtle.

mm. On or about March 31, 2016, MATTHEW TYLER FISCHER received \$14,973 into his Bank of America account from a \$15,000 wire, as payment to STEVEN VERREN BAKER for a shipment of Flattened Musk Turtles.

nn. On or about April 3, 2016, STEVEN VERREN BAKER and
exchanged text messages regarding the sale and shipment of Eastern Box Turtles.

oo. On or about April 4, 2016, STEVEN VERREN BAKER exchanged text messages regarding the exchange of Reeves' Turtles.

pp. On or about April 5, 2016, STEVEN VERREN BAKER and MATTHEW HARRISON KAIL exchanged text messages negotiating the acquisition and sale of Ornate Diamondback Terrapins as well as discussing Indian Roofed Turtles.

- qq. On or about April 6, 2016, STEVEN VERREN BAKER and MATTHEW HARRISON KAIL exchanged text messages regarding the acquisition of turtles as well as sharing a photograph of Flattened Musk Turtles along with tracking information regarding USPS package xxx-4990HK.
- rr. On or about April 6, 2016, STEVEN VERREN BAKER and MATTHEW HARRISON KAIL exchanged text messages regarding pulling money out of an account and the acquisition of 'stuff' by MATTHEW HARRISON KAIL.
- ss. On or about April 8, 2016, USPS package xxx-4990HK containing a Reeves' Turtle, a Big-Headed Turtle, and Indian Roofed Turtles, originating in Hong Kong, was delivered to "L BROOKS" at 191 Brelands Road, Holly Hill, South Carolina.
- tt. On or about April 11, 2016, MATTHEW TYLER FISCHER received an approximately \$13,473.00 international money wire into his Bank of America account from King Chi Trading Company in Hong Kong. The King Chi Trading Company facilitated payment for .
- uu. On or about April 11, 2016, MATTHEW TYLER FISCHER issued Bank of America check number 118 to STEVEN VERREN BAKER for approximately \$13,273.00.
- vv. On or about April 11, 2016, STEVEN VERREN BAKER sent by text to MATTHEW HARRISON KAIL a photograph of Indian Roofed Turtles, confirming shipment.

- ww. On or about April 16, 2016, STEVEN VERREN BAKER and MATTHEW HARRISON KAIL exchanged text messages regarding the sale of Alabama Red-Bellied Cooters, an endangered species.
- xx. On or about April 18, 2016, STEVEN VERREN BAKER and MATTHEW HARRISON KAIL exchanged text messages regarding the sale of Four-Eyed Turtles and Big-Headed Turtles.
- yy. On or about April 18, 2016, STEVEN VERREN BAKER and
exchanged text messages regarding the sale and shipment of Eastern Box Turtles.
- zz. On or about April 19, 2016, STEVEN VERREN BAKER and MATTHEW HARRISON KAIL exchanged text messages regarding the shipment of Beale's Eyed Turtles and Indian Flapshell Turtles from Hong Kong.
- aaa. On or about April 20, 2016, STEVEN VERREN BAKER and MATTHEW HARRISON KAIL exchanged text messages regarding the turtles he wanted to order, "10 deltagola baby's; 10 northern blackknob baby's; 2.5 blotched juvies; 2.5 rings juvies; 2.5 deltagole juvies; 2.5 northern Black knob juvies; 10.10 flawless ornates; And 10.30 striped necks for Jason".
- bbb. On or about April 21, 2016, illegally shipped from Hong Kong turtles protected under CITES to JOSEPH LOGAN BROOKS and STEVEN VERREN BAKER at 191 Brelands Road, Holly Hill, South Carolina.

- ccc. On or about April 24, 2016, STEVEN VERREN BAKER and
exchanged text messages regarding the sale and
shipment of Eastern Box Turtles.
- ddd. On or about April 24, 2016,
completed a CitiBank Application for Fund Transfer form detailing a wire
of funds to the bank account of MATTHEW TYLER FISCHER in the amount
of \$1,400.00.
- eee. On or about April 25, 2016, USPS package xxx-2300HK that originated
in Hong Kong containing Big-Headed Turtles was received by "L
BROOKS/BAKER" at 191 Brelands Road, Holly Hill, South Carolina.
- fff. On or about April 25, 2016, illegally shipped from Hong Kong
USPS package xxx-9050HK containing South American River Turtles
protected under CITES to "Logan BROOKS 191 Brelands Rd, Holly Hill,
SC".
- ggg. On or about April 25, 2016, illegally shipped from Hong Kong
USPS package xxx-9063HK containing Black-Breasted Leaf Turtles
protected under CITES to "Logan BROOKS 191 Brelands Rd, Holly Hill,
SC".
- hhh. On or about April 25, 2016, STEVEN VERREN BAKER and
exchanged text messages regarding the sale and
shipment of Eastern Box Turtles.

- iii. On or about April 27, 2016, MATTHEW TYLER FISCHER issued Bank of America check #121 in the amount of \$1,373.00 to the common-law wife of STEVEN VERREN BAKER in payment for CITES Protected Turtles.
- jjj. On or about April 28, 2016, USPS package xxx-9050HK was delivered to "B LOGANF" at 191 Brelands Road, Holly Hill, South Carolina.
- kkk. On or about April 28, 2016, USPS package xxx-9063HK was delivered to "B LOGANF" at 191 Brelands Road, Holly Hill, South Carolina.
- lll. On or about April 29, 2016, USPS package xxx-2287HK that originated in Hong Kong was delivered to "M FISCHER" at 191 Brelands Road, Holly Hill, South Carolina.
- mmm. On or about April 29, 2016 STEVEN VERREN BAKER and MATTHEW HARRISON KAIL exchanged text messages regarding the acquisition of Alabama Map Turtles and Black-Knobbed Map Turtles
- nnn. On or about May 2, 2016, STEVEN VERREN BAKER and
exchanged text messages regarding the transaction of Black-Knobbed Map Turtles.
- ooo. On or about May 5, 2016, MATTHEW TYLER FISCHER received \$500.00 into his Bank of America account.
- ppp. On or about May 5, 2016, MATTHEW TYLER FISCHER issued Bank of America check number 122 to STEVEN VERREN BAKER for approximately \$500.00.

- qqq. On or about May 4, 2016, STEVEN VERREN BAKER exchanged text messages regarding the exchange of Eastern Box Turtles.
- rrr. On or about May 7, 2016, STEVEN VERREN BAKER and MATTHEW HARRISON KAIL exchanged text messages regarding the pricing and sale of turtles, in essence, " I need badly 20.20 ornates; 10.30 stripe necks; 2.5 juvie rings; 2.5 blotched; And of course mangroves Lol and what are the albino temple turtles worth to you ?"
- sss. On or about May 7, 2016, STEVEN VERREN BAKER and
exchanged text messages regarding the sale and transfer of an Eastern Box Turtle.
- ttt. On or about May 9, 2016, STEVEN VERREN BAKER and MATTHEW HARRISON KAIL exchanged text messages regarding the acquisition of Alabama Map Turtles.
- uuu. On or about May 10, 2016, MATTHEW HARRISON KAIL sent STEVEN VERREN BAKER a photograph of Flattened Musk Turtles, requesting a shipment of two boxes.
- vvv. On or about May 11, 2016, STEVEN VERREN BAKER sent
a photograph of approximately eleven turtles concealed inside white socks, subsequently shipped to Hsien Lin Hsu a/k/a Jason Hsu by MATTHEW TYLER FISCHER for international delivery to
in USPS package xxx-WNFNM.

www. On or about May 12 and 13, 2016, STEVEN VERREN BAKER and MATTHEW HARRISON KAIL exchanged text messages regarding the shipment of turtles: "15 podocs [South American Yellow-Spotted Sideneck Turtles]", "Two female narrow bridge [Narrow-Bridged Musk Turtles]", "Two flavos [Yellow-Margined Box Turtles]", "Ten hyp Reeves [hypomelanistic Reeves' Turtles]", "And a big head...[Big-Headed Turtle]"

xxx. On or about May 18, 2016, STEVEN VERREN BAKER possessed approximately 25 Reeves' Turtles, three Big-Headed Turtles, one Black-Breasted Leaf Turtle, four Chinese or Yellow-Margined Box Turtles, four South American Yellow-Spotted Sideneck Turtles, and one Indian Roofed Turtle.

yyy. On or about May 21, 2016, STEVEN VERREN BAKER and [REDACTED] exchanged messages regarding the shipment of Eastern Box Turtles and the arrest of [REDACTED] by Hong Kong authorities.

zzz. On or about May 23, 2016, STEVEN VERREN BAKER and [REDACTED] exchanged messages regarding the arrest of [REDACTED]

aaaa. On or about May 27, 2016, STEVEN VERREN BAKER and [REDACTED] exchanged messages regarding the obstruction of the investigation into wildlife trafficking.

bbbb. On or about May 29, 2016, MATTHEW HARRISON KAIL was apprehended

collecting two Spotted Turtles (CITES II) from Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge.

cccc. On or about May 29, 2016, MATTHEW HARRISON KAIL possessed approximately two Ornate Diamondback Terrapins and \$17,000 in cash.

dddd. On or about May 30, 2016, STEVEN VERREN BAKER and

exchanged messages regarding outstanding debt from turtle transactions.

All in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 371.

FORFEITURE

A. CONSPIRACY TO SMUGGLE GOODS INTO AND FROM THE U.S.

Upon conviction for violations of Title 18, United States Code, Section 371 (conspiracy to smuggle goods into and from the United States, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Sections 545 and 554) as charged in Count 1 of this Indictment, the Defendants, STEVEN VERREN BAKER, JOSEPH LOGAN BROOKS, MATTHEW TYLER FISCHER, WILLIAM MARTIN FISCHER, MATTHEW HARRISON KAIL,

, shall forfeit to the

United States any property, real or personal, constituting, derived from or traceable to proceeds the Defendants obtained directly or indirectly as a result of such offenses, pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 981(a)(1)(C) and 28 U.S.C. § 2461(c).

B. PROPERTY:

The property subject to forfeiture includes, but is not limited to, the following:

1. Cash Proceeds/Money Judgment:

A sum of money equal to all proceeds the Defendants obtained directly or indirectly as the result of the offenses charged in this Indictment, and all interest and proceeds traceable thereto, for their violations of Title 18, United States Code, Sections 371 and 545 and 554.

2. Wildlife:

- A. 25 Reeves' Turtles (*Mauremys reevesii*)
- B. 3 Big-Headed Turtles (*Platysternon megacephalum*)
- C. 1 Black-breasted Leaf Turtle (*Geoemyda spengleri*)
- D. 4 Chinese or Yellow-margined Box Turtles (*Cuora flavomarginata*)
- E. 4 South American Yellow-spotted Sideneck Turtles (*Podocnemis unifilis*)
- F. 1 Indian Roofed Turtle

All seized from the JOSEPH LOGAN BROOKS and STEVEN VERREN BAKER residence at 191 Brelands Road, Holly Hill, South Carolina, on May 18, 2016.

C. SUBSTITUTE ASSETS:

If any of the property described above as being subject to forfeiture, as a result of any act or omission of the Defendants –

- (a) cannot be located upon the exercise of due diligence;
- (b) has been transferred or sold to, or deposited with, a third person;
- (c) has been placed beyond the jurisdiction of the Court;
- (d) has been substantially diminished in value; or
- (e) has been commingled with other property which cannot be subdivided without difficulty;

it is the intent of the United States, pursuant to Title 21, United States Code, Section 853(p), as incorporated by 18 U.S.C. § 982(b)(1), to seek forfeiture of any other property of the said Defendant up to the value of the above described forfeitable property;

Pursuant to Title 18, United States Code, Section 981(a)(1)(C), and Title 28, United States Code, Section 2461(c).

A True BILL

FOREPERSON 

Nancy C. Wicker for
BETH DRAKE (WDHjr)
UNITED STATES ATTORNEY